



March 9, 2023

Capitol Office
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

Re: SUPPORT FOR THE SEISMIC RETROFITTING PROGRAM FOR SOFT STORY MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom, Assemblymembers Freddie Rodriguez, Philip Ting, Mia Bonta, Anthony Rendon, and Senators Nancy Skinner and Toni Atkins:

Thank you for your leadership in managing the State's budget deficit. We understand that with this deficit, there is a need to pull back on funding allocations for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. **However, we write now to urge you to protect the \$250 million investment in the 2023-24 budget to fund the new Seismic Retrofitting Program for Soft Story Multifamily Housing (Government Code Article 5.10).**

On February 6th in Turkey and Syria, two major earthquakes left over 50,000 people dead and collapsed or damaged more than 160,000 buildings. The aftermath of this tragedy is likely to reveal that many of the collapsed buildings suffered from the same vulnerabilities as certain older building types in California—soft-story condition, unreinforced concrete, etc. Across the state, these at-risk buildings contribute greatly to affordable housing supply. The **Seismic Retrofitting Program for Soft Story Multifamily Housing** is a cost effective housing preservation measure, and \$250 million is far cheaper than what it would cost to rebuild these housing units after a quake. This program is invaluable to the advancement of earthquake resilience efforts across the state and, for that reason, we are here to express our willingness to work with you in this endeavor.

"Soft story" residential buildings are among the most common and most collapse-prone structures in communities throughout California. Some cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, have the resources and staff expertise to develop and implement their own retrofit programs. But most municipalities do not, and this new program could make the difference in their ability to survive, respond, and recover from earthquakes.

The new program offers benefits well in excess of its \$250 million, 10-year budget:

- The appropriation required by Government Code Section 8590.16(c) covers ten years of work. Undoing the appropriation to help solve a one-time deficit will have implications for years to come.
- By starting now, the new program can leverage the recent work done in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other leading cities. Thanks to those programs, our engineering and contracting communities are well trained and ready to meet increased demand. This advantage goes away, however, if the Legislature sweeps the budget or delays the program.
- The program is dedicated to affordable housing in high seismicity, socially vulnerable communities. This is not a luxury program.
- In addition to subsidizing retrofits, the appropriation sets aside 10 percent to help local building departments plan and implement the work. This is the state smartly investing in and coordinating with local jurisdictions.

- Meanwhile, some small and mid-size cities across the state are cautiously developing soft story ordinances, but many of them are counting on the new state program to make their efforts viable. Cutting the state program will bring many of these local efforts to a halt.

We appreciate very much your leadership and focus on this important issue and we and our coalition partners across the state stand ready and willing to work with you to protect and preserve this important program in the budget.

Sincerely,

Sarah Atkinson
Earthquake Resilience Policy Manager
San Francisco Bay Area Planning & Urban Research Association (SPUR)
Phone: 510-589-1626 | www.spur.org
satkinson@spur.org

Heidi Tremayne
Executive Director
Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI)
Phone: 510-451-0905 | www.eeri.org
heidi@eeri.org

Don Schinske
Executive Director
Structural Engineers Association of California (SEAOC)
Phone: 916-447-1198 | www.seaoc.org
dschinske@seaoc.org

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft
Mayor
City of Alameda
mezzyashcraft@alamedaca.gov

Sarah Zarate
Director, Office of Administration, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations
City of San José
sarah.zarate@sanjoseca.gov

Jean Casey
Project Manager
City of Oakland
jcasey@oaklandca.gov

Ami Bellomo
Process Coordinator, Planning & Building
City of Oakland
mbellomo@oaklandca.gov

Matt Dorsey*
District 6 Supervisor
City and County of San Francisco
bryan.dahl@sfgov.org

Michael Brownrigg
Mayor
City of Burlingame
mbrownrigg@burlingame.org

Kevin Gardiner
Community Development Director
City of Burlingame
kgardiner@burlingame.org

Lina Velasco*
Director of Community Development
City of Richmond
lina_velasco@ci.richmond.ca.us

Brenna Marcoux
Structural Engineer
SEAOC
marcouxb3@gmail.com

Mark Hall
CEO
Revalue.IO
mark@revalue.io

Evan Reis
Executive Director
US Resiliency Council
evan.reis@usrc.org

Ana Miscolta
Director of Community Resilience, RISE
Thrive Alliance of Nonprofits San Mateo County
ana@thrivealliance.org

Jeff Ellis
Director of Codes & Compliance
Simpson Strong-Tie
jellis@strongtie.com

David Cocks & Samuel Mengelkoch
Principals
Structural Focus
dcocke@structuralfocus.com

Craig Chamberlain*
Structural Engineer
craig.m.chamberlain@imegcorp.com

Zahraa Saiyed*
CEO, Scyma Consulting
Board Director, EERI
saiyed.zahraa@gmail.com

Steven Patton*
Structural Engineer
turbonium78@gmail.com

Jesse Arreguin*
Mayor
City of Berkeley
mayor@cityofberkeley.info

Reynaud Serrette*
Professor
Santa Clara University
rserrette@scu.edu

Taryn Williams*
Senior Project Manager
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH)
taryn.nicole.williams@gmail.com

Irving Torres*
Individual
irvingtorr@gmail.com

**My signature does not indicate the official opinion of the elected body on which I serve or the organization at which I work.*

—Comments from signatories—

Please share briefly why the Seismic Retrofitting Program for Soft Story Multifamily Housing is important to your community.

2.5 million Californians may live in seismically vulnerable soft-story apartment buildings. Preliminary reconnaissance from the Turkey earthquake indicates soft story buildings were among the many that collapsed over the past 24 hours. The funding appropriated by law to help apartment owners retrofit their buildings, can prevent the deaths of tens of thousands of Californians in the future.

The City of Alameda has many soft story multi-family properties that are vulnerable in an earthquake, and are the homes of some of our most vulnerable community members. Alameda has an ordinance and efforts to assist property owners in their retrofit efforts:

https://www.alamedaca.gov/files/assets/public/bld-cde-oci-soft_story_ordinance.pdf

Thrive RISE sees soft story retrofit as both a life safety and equity issue, with lack of action primarily harming lower- to moderate-income renters in San Mateo County. Soft story retrofit is an important policy issue to move forward in our communities, and this funding serves as a key tool for implementation.

The City of Berkeley, like many California communities, is situated on a fault line capable of producing deadly earthquakes. While we have made great strides in our local Soft Story program, it is imperative that all jurisdictions have access to this life-saving program.

I am a California-licensed structural engineer with 19 years of experience living and working in the structural engineering community in the Bay Area. I know the importance of housing to community resilience after a disaster, and fully support this measure.

My community has two major fault lines that are overdue for rupture. Many existing buildings need retrofit improvements to protect lives and avoid citizen displacement. This is an important and necessary investment for the safety of Californians.

We work to remove home health hazards and energy burden, so this initiative is in line with efforts to make communities and homes safer and more sustainable.

I witnessed up close the devastating damage to residential buildings with soft stories in the Northridge EQ!!!

Provides critical upgrades to vulnerable buildings housing a high percentage of vulnerable populations.

Protecting vulnerable affordable housing is extremely important, especially during a housing crisis.

Safe housing in a seismic acting area protects our community's most important resource - people.

As a structural engineer, I want to promote seismic safety across California.

Funds would help make housing in the City of Richmond resilient during earthquakes.

It will save lives.